

SELF-HUMBLING NO. 748

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1867,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Because your heart was tender, and you did humble yourself before God, when you heard his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbled yourself before me, and did rend your clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard you also, says the Lord.”
2 Chronicles 34:27.*

JOSIAH was very earnestly engaged in a devout work for God—he was cleansing, beautifying, and repairing the temple at Jerusalem. While this was being done, a copy of the book of the laws being found, it was carried to the king, and the king at once diligently perused it. While reading it he discovered certain terrible penalties threatened to idolaters and other offenders, and knowing that his subjects had for successive years been guilty of the offenses thus condemned, he felt persuaded that the righteous judgments of God would come upon them.

Greatly alarmed, though himself personally innocent of the guilt, he rent his clothes, wept, and humbled himself before the Most High. Now, it seemed a strange thing, did it not, that so good a man, personally so clear from blame, engaged in one of the holiest of works with a sincere heart devoting himself to the cause of his God, should meet with so sad and depressive a discovery just in the very midst of his prosperous labors!

Was there not another time that the law could have been sent to him with its condemning power? Were there not other offenders far more grossly erring than he, who might have been humbled? Why need this king, with his large, royal, tender heart, all consecrated to God, to be set a weeping, and to be made to go softly in the bitterness of his soul, just in the very moment of enthusiastic and successful labor?

I take it that the reason was this—God had much love towards Josiah, and having honored him to rebuild the temple, He knew the natural tendency of the human heart to pride, and therefore, with a holy jealousy for one whom He loved so well, He sent him this discovery of the book of the law, to keep him humble at the time when otherwise he might have been exposed to peril by the lifting up of his heart.

You remember, beloved friends, the case of Hezekiah, when God raised him up from the sick bed. It is said he rendered not recompense to God according to the benefit received, for his heart was lifted up within him. And then God sent him a message by the prophet to tell him that the treasures of his house would be carried away into Babylon, and his sons would be captives to serve the king of Babylon—thus the Lord administered a check after the sin had broken out.

But in the case before us, the Lord preferred a preventive to a cure, and sent a check before the mischief had occurred, and so the holy worker became also the humble penitent—and there was blended in the life of Josiah, like the blending of the drops of rain with the gleams of sunlight, a fair rainbow of many virtues. For you see him toiling for his Lord with all his might, and yet bowing himself in dust and ashes, as an humble suppliant before the throne of heavenly grace. Learn from this, that you and I in the midst of a career of success from God, when our heart is most pure and most right, must not therefore expect that all things will go smoothly, but may rather for that very reason expect to experience humiliating circumstances.

Like Paul, when favored with an abundance of revelations, we may expect a “thorn in the flesh,” lest we should be exalted above measure. Disclosures of our own weakness and sinfulness are often made to us at the very time when God is honoring us most. In order that our vessel may be able to endure a

strong and fair wind of divine favor, the Lord in infinite wisdom causes us to be ballasted with grief or trial.

This morning I cannot enter into the whole of my text, but I shall ask your attention to Josiah's humbling himself. In this matter we shall note, first, *the acceptable act*. Secondly, *the powerful reasons which exist for our imitating it*. And thirdly, *the encouraging results which followed*—some of them are clear in his case, and others we may expect in our own.

I. First, we have to speak upon THE ACCEPTABLE ACT which Josiah performed.

I say an *act*, not a *grace* or a *state*. It is not said that Josiah was humble. He *was* so, or he would not have trembled at God's Word.

All graces are in all Christians in a measure. In every Christian there is the germ of every virtue. Just as in every well-formed child there is every muscle and sinew, and nerve and bone, although all are far from being developed, yet it is there. So in each Christian there exists humility, with all the kindred graces, though it is as yet in some scarcely perceptible, and in others is far removed from perfection.

Josiah certainly possessed the grace of humility. It is not said that his soul was in a state of habitual humility, although he ought to have been. We ought always to be, in a certain sense, in the valley of humiliation. Pride is never to be excused in the believer. There is never a moment when we may safely be lifted up. Always lowly should we be in our own esteem. He who thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, deceives himself. And as we are always nothing in ourselves, it would be well for us to know and to feel this, and not to be self-deceived, or lay a flattering unction to our hearts.

What is mentioned in the text is *an act*, not a *grace*, not a *state*, but an *act*. We have before us the grace of humility in Josiah, acting after its own nature to produce the state of humility in his soul. He humbled himself, that is, he set to work to cure himself of any remaining pride, and to educate in himself the humility which the grace of God had wrought in him. He humbled himself. He confessed his share in the sin which God condemned. He acknowledged on his own part the justice of God in threatening such punishments. He stripped himself of his royal array. He made no mention of services which he had rendered to God in the temple. He mentioned not his own generosity in having given of his treasures to the decorations of the house of the Lord. But he came as that poor publican is described as coming in our Lord's famous parable, not "daring to lift so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smiting upon his breast, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

So that, brethren, I want you this morning not so much to inquire whether you have humility, for I know that if you are believers, humility is somewhere in your heart. I do not ask you whether you are in an humble state this morning, it may be you are not. But I want you to accompany me in an act of humiliation, in the bowing of your souls before the Lord—each man and each woman, according to the experience of each, bowing low and reverently before the majesty of the Most High, that we may obtain from God the mercies which each of us may need.

1. Concerning this action, then, I have to mention, in the first place, that it was *a real and personal act*. The text says, "Because your heart was tender, and you did humble yourself." You did not *talk* about humbling yourself, but you *did* humble yourself. You did not *bid others* do it, but you did humble *yourself*. It became to you a personal matter of obligation, and you did not postpone that obligation, or look at it, and commend it, and say, "When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you," but you did humble yourself, really, sincerely, truly, and in very deed. You did, in your own proper person, bow yourself to the very dust before the Most High."

Brethren, I fear lest the habit of preaching to you may lead me to forget my personal share in this and other holy exercises. I pray God it may not! And on the other hand, it is possible that you may criticize the style in which I address you, and so may forget that my style is not the business in hand. We are now to have respect to a very solemn obligation, of which our text reminds us. I pray you let us come honestly to the work, and may God's Holy Spirit help us, and may each one here be willing now to have it said of him, "You did humble yourself."

2. Observe too that as the work was real and personal, so it was *voluntary*. “You did humble yourself.” It is not said that God humbled him, by which it is not implied that the grace of God did not assist him, that the Spirit of God was not the author of his humility, but it is implied that God did not by any overt and open judgment of providence cause Josiah to be humbled.

Have you ever noticed the difference between being humble and being humbled? Many persons are humbled who are not humble at all. Pharaoh was humbled, oh! how humbled, when he saw that even the flies and lice could vanquish both himself and his men-at-arms! How humbled was he when he found that the God of heaven could send plague after plague upon him, and make the proud lips that said, “Who is JEHOVAH that I should obey His voice?” cry, “Entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thundering and hail!” He must have been humbled, but he was not humble.

And when the chill waters rolled over him in the Red Sea, he died with a proud spirit, but he had been humiliated to the last degree. Even so, God may humble some of us. He may take away our property, and we may be humbled by being poor. He may be pleased to strip us of that which is now the object of our boasting, and we may be humbled by its loss.

But the duty to which I call you this morning is that of humbling yourselves before judgment comes to deal with you, as, mark you, it surely will, unless you attend to the gracious precept, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. We must all either break or bow. Let us bow cheerfully. “Let us kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way.” It is a voluntary humiliation of soul which is taught by the example of Josiah, and may the Spirit of God make us willing in the day of His power, that we may willingly humble ourselves before God.

3. It was, moreover, *a sincerely devout act* on the part of Josiah. He humbled himself, we are told, “before God.” It is true he did put on sackcloth, and rend his clothes, and so far his humiliation was apparent to men, but the soul of his humbling was before God alone. It is vain to put on sackcloth, and to bow your head like a bulrush before man, unless your heart abases itself before God. Outward mourning and fasting are not humiliation, neither does God care for them if the heart is absent. “Tear your hearts, and not your garments.” Let your souls be humbled and your spirits contrite.

Dear friends, we want more and more to walk in our religion before God. Away with that holiness which consists in respect to the forms and customs of society! Away with that religion which flaunts itself before the staring eyes of a fellow mortal! We want that grace which has respect to the God who sees in secret. We want more and more, in fact, of spiritual worship, for they who worship God the Spirit must “worship him in spirit and in truth.” Your hymns are no songs of praise unless they are sung unto God. Your prayers are no prayers unless you seek the face of the God of Israel. And your humblings are nothing but another form of pride unless your souls have a reverent and deep respect unto the Lord.

4. Once again, the act on the part of Josiah was *a very deep and thorough one*. He did not *try* to humble himself, but he *did* it. This I gather from the repetition of the fact in the text. Where inspiration mentions a thing twice, it is because God would have our notice drawn to it. It is written, “You did humble yourself before God,” and again, “and humbled yourself before me.” It was not garment-tearing merely, it was heart-breaking. Josiah was really broken in heart. He did not struggle to get himself down where he should be, he was down. At the foot of the mercy seat he cast himself as a true broken-hearted penitent.

Beloved, it is an easy thing to say, “I would be humble,” but to be humble before God is another thing. And to begin the sacred work of humiliation before the Most High is no great thing, but to continue in it until at last you can say, “Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O God”—this is a blessed work, and you need the assistance of the Spirit of God in it. We are all at certain times conscious of our weakness, but we forget the humbling fact. Our humility is like the morning cloud and the early dew which passes away. But to have this inwrought into the spirit till the whole heart becomes thoroughly self-mortified, and pride is excluded and shut out, this it is that we want, and this it is that will win the blessing.

Beloved friends, let me say to you that the grace of humility, of which I spoke in the first place, is exceedingly sweet before God, and where it does not exist, a man cannot humble himself. Let me also remark that the state of humility is much more blessed than the mere act of humiliation, and should be the condition of every Christian at all times. We ought always to walk humbly before the Lord, but if we are not in the state of humility, we must exercise the act of humility in order to bring us into it. We ought always to be clean, but as we are not always so, through contact with this evil world, there must be a time for cleansing—so we ought to be always humble. But as we are not so, there must be a time for humbling ourselves.

Now, let no man or woman in this place be exempt from the work before us, for here is a king, an eminent person, and yet he humbles himself! Sons of the earth, will not you do the same? Here is one engaged in the greatest of works, yet he humbles himself! Let no pastor, no minister, no elder, no deacon, let no earnest evangelist, let no successful laborer, as a private Christian, fancy himself excused.

Josiah bowed, who dares stand erect? Let each heart in its own place bow before the Most High. Here is one who was pure in his life, who feared God and died in the act of fulfilling his treaty with his eastern allies, and defending his country against the tyrant Pharaoh-necho, who sought to keep him from the battle by pretending to have been sent by God. He lived as a saint, and died as a patriot king might wish to die, and yet he humbles himself before the Most High! O friends, do not we perceive that this example demands of us immediate imitation? The Lord lead us into it.

II. Grant me your earnest attention while I give a few POWERFUL REASONS why we should perform the same act as this which is recorded of Hezekiah.

1. My brethren, reasons for humbling ourselves are more abundant than the time allowed me in which to urge them upon you. In the first place, *a deep sense and clear sight of sin, its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves*, should make us lie low before the throne. We have sinned. We, we have erred and strayed from His ways like lost sheep—we who are now present. We have sinned as Christians. Alas! that it should be so.

Favored as we have been, we have yet been ungrateful. Privileged beyond most, we have not brought forth fruit in proportion. Who among us, though he may long have been engaged in the Christian warfare, will not blush when he looks back upon the past? As for our days before we were regenerate, may God blot them out—may they be forgiven and forgotten. But since then, though we have not sinned as before, yet there has been this peculiar aggravation of our sins, that we have sinned against light and against love—light which has really penetrated our minds, and love which we have been able to recognize, and in which we have rejoiced. Oh! the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul! An unpardoned sinner sins, to my mind, cheaply compared with the sin of one of God's own elect ones, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom.

Look, brethren, at David! Many will talk of his sin, but I pray you look at his repentance, and hear his broken bones, as each one of them moans out its heart-rending confession! Mark his tears, as they fall upon the ground, and the deep sighs with which he accompanies the softened music of his harp! We have erred—let us, therefore seek the spirit of penitence.

Look, again, at Peter! We speak much of Peter's denying his Master. Remember, it is written, "He wept bitterly." Have *we* no such offenses to weep over? Are there no denials of our Lord to be lamented with tears? Think, brethren, these sins of ours deserve nothing less than the hottest hell. These sins of ours, before and after conversion, would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire, if it were not for the sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning. Is there no help here towards the work of soul-humbling? My soul, bow down under a sense of your natural filthiness, and worship your God.

2. Let us reflect upon another humbling subject—*our origin and our end*. Here are we, the offspring of a day. Unclean things brought out of an unclean thing. Children that are corrupters. The seed of evildoers. What are we at the best but mere animated earth? And ere long we shall be brought into that lowly bed where the worms shall be under us, and the worms shall cover us. We shall become a puff of

wind, a handful of brown dust—and shall we glory? We who sprang from nothing, and must go back to nothing, shall we boast in ourselves? O worm of the dust, know yourself, and cease from pride!

3. I would remind you also, my dear brethren, of that *sovereign grace* which has made us to differ. I frequently find that a sense of God's amazing love to me has a greater tendency to humble me than even a consciousness of my own guilt. Think, my brethren, what you are by grace! You were chosen of God according to His purpose. Chosen, not for good in you, but chosen because *He would* choose you. Because, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." You were "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ." You were so lost that nothing could save you but the sacrifice of God's only-begotten.

Think of that, and as Jesus stooped for you, bow yourselves in lowliness at His feet. You are now a child of God, a favorite of the skies, on the road to glory, with a heritage beyond the black river which shall be yours when suns and moons have paled their waning light. You are to dwell forever near to God, and to be like Him. Surely the thoughts of such amazing goodness will make the vessel, laden so heavily with God's mercy, sink in the water, even to its bulwarks. Surely you will feel that you must bless and magnify God, because you are less than the least of all His mercies.

4. Further, let me ask you to think of *the greatness of God*. It is not in my power by words to bring before you that tremendous subject. But if I could put you in the position of Job, when he said, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees you," you would be certain to add with that patriarch, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

*"Great God, how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!"*

5. Once more, think of *the life and death of the Savior*. See your Master taking a towel and washing His disciples' feet. And follower of Christ, will you not humble yourself. Nay, see Him all His life long. Is not this sentence the summary of His biography—"He humbled himself"? Was He not here on earth always stripping—taking off first one robe of honor and then another, till, naked, He was fastened to the cross, and then emptied out His inmost self, pouring out the floods of His life-blood from His heart, and giving up all for us, till they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave?

*"His honor and His breath
Were taken both away,
Joined with the wicked in His death,
And made as vile as they."*

How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How then can we be proud? Stand, my beloved brethren and sisters, at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed. See the thorn-crown. Mark still the relics of the spittle on those blessed cheeks. Go round the cross and mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills. See hands and feet given up to the rough iron, and His whole self to mockery and scorn. See the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in His outward frame. Hear the thrilling shriek, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross, you have never seen it. If you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus, you do not know Him.

I pray the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, and I know our position will no longer be that of the inflated, pompous man or woman of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much, because much has been forgiven us.

I would, however, warn the inexperienced believer concerning this act of humbling—*do not make mistakes about it*. Do not mistake sham humility for real humility. There is a cant of humility which is infamous. People will say in prayer, "Your poor dust," and use all sorts of depreciating expressions

when they are as proud as Lucifer. They will say before the Lord things concerning themselves which they are very far from believing, for from their manner and bearing, it is clear that their estimate of themselves is far from being too low.

There are others who think that laziness is humility. They cry, “Oh, I could not do this! I could not do the other!” when they might do it, and should do it, and ought to do it, and could do it, God the Holy Ghost helping them. But they shirk every duty because they have a sense of inability, and they cover their idleness with the mantle of supposed humility. Moses was rebuked by God very strongly when he made excuses, and would gladly have avoided going into the great work to which the Lord had called him. Let us not raise questions with our God when He calls us to labor, but let us say, “Here I am, send me.” Do not fall into that miserable counterfeit humility, but like men, use all your strength for Jesus.

Again, do not mistake unbelief for humility. “I hope I am,” “I trust I am,” and expressions of that kind, savor far more of distrust of God than of humility of spirit, for the best form of humility is compatible with the highest degree of faith. In fact, that is not true faith, but spurious, which is not humble. And that is not genuine humility of the loveliest type which is not confident in God. Faith and humility should always walk together. Let the grace in you be real grace, and to that end ask the Spirit of God to work it in you.

Let me add, dear friend, if you find it difficult to humble yourself before God, stand to it the more earnestly, for the more difficult it is, the more you need it. If your soul were humble, it would easily humble itself, but because it is proud, it needs humbling. And for this reason it finds the duty irksome and displeasing to the flesh. Mortify your pride, my brethren. Let your souls be mortified on account of sin. And if you cannot yourself do it, you know where your strength lies, fly to your Master for strength, and you shall have enabling grace.

Again, let me say, in order to humble yourselves, exercise all your faculties. Let your memory bring before you your past offenses. Let your understanding form a proper judgment of your position as a creature, as a sinner, and now as a dependent servant. Your understanding will greatly help you, for true humility is forming a just estimate of oneself, and to humble oneself is to bring oneself down to the place where one ought to be. Let your hopes and your fears, let your affections and your passions, let all the powers of your intellect and heart agree to this—that now before God you will humble yourself as Josiah did. I have given you the reasons. May God apply those reasons with power by His Holy Spirit!

III. Lastly, I have to encourage our friends to this duty by ENCOURAGING RESULTS.

I think it was Bernard, or one of the preachers of the middle ages, who said, “There is one thing to be said for humility, that it never can by any possibility do one harm.” If a man goes through a door, and he has the habit of stooping his head, it may be the door is so high there is no need for stooping, but the stooping is no injury to him. But if the door should happen to be a low one, and he has the habit of holding up his head, he may come into sharp contact with the top of the door. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case. Whether it is prayer or praise, whether it is work or suffering, the salt of humility cannot be used in excess.

1. But there are positive advantages connected with it, for, first, *humiliation will often turn away judgment.* How many times in the history of the Israelites, when they were given over to their enemies, their humbling themselves at once drove away the invaders, and set them free from the scourge! Perhaps some of the most remarkable cases which I can quote are those of wicked men, for their cases show the power of humiliation with God where there is nothing else to work upon Him.

Rehoboam had set up a false worship, and “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Therefore God was provoked with Rehoboam and with Judah. And Shishak, the king of Egypt, came up and ravaged Judea, and was about to capture Jerusalem, but we read that Rehoboam and Judah humbled themselves before God, and the Lord said that Shishak should not touch Jerusalem, and moreover, the Lord visited the land with favor, and it is said, “also in Judah things went well.” This mercy was granted, not because of any good thing in Rehoboam or his people, but only because they humbled themselves.

A more remarkable case still is that of Ahab. Ahab had killed Naboth to obtain his vineyard, but when he entered that vineyard, stained with innocent blood, Elijah met him with the cutting question, "Have you killed, and also taken possession?" And Ahab's proud and haughty spirit was cowed with fear of Elijah, and he cried, "Have you found me, O my enemy!" Elijah delivered the terrible sentence of God to him, that the whole of his household would die, and that Jezebel would be eaten by dogs in that very vineyard.

Ahab could no longer, after hearing that sentence, keep up his brazen countenance, but we read, "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." Then the Lord said unto Elijah, "See you how Ahab humbles himself before me? because he humbles himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days." So that this basest of all men, this wicked Ahab, whose name stands infamous in the Chronicles of the Kings, yet obtained a blessing from God when he humbled himself.

As for God's people, when the Lord has been about to smite them, He has usually stayed His hands when they have humbled themselves. See the case of Hezekiah which we have already mentioned. Hezekiah humbled himself, it is said, because of the pride of his heart, and the Lord said this evil should not be brought upon him in his day. And Josiah, in this case, also turned aside the sword of the Lord from the Israel of his own day, because he humbled himself.

My dear friend, you are under the paternal discipline of God, and He will make you feel His chastening rod. But if you humble yourselves, you put the rod away. You know, with your own children, if you feel compelled to chasten, yet when you see softness and tenderness of heart, and a sweet readiness to confess the fault, it goes against your heart that the rod should be used, and you put it away, for humble sorrow is all that you wanted to produce, and if the effect is there already, there is no need of further sternness. So the Lord turns away the chastisement from His people when they humble themselves.

2. Humiliation of soul always *brings a positive blessing with it*. The old philosophers were accustomed to assert, as a law of matter, "Nature abhors a vacuum." This old dictum is out of date nowadays, but it is still true spiritually. So, then, if you and I empty ourselves, depend upon it, God will fill us. Divine grace seeks out and fills a vacuum. Make a vacuum by humility, and God will fill that vacuum by His love. He who desires sweet communion with Christ, should remember the words of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." "He has respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knows afar off."

Stoop, my dear friend, if you would climb to heaven. Do we not say of Jesus, "He descended that He might ascend"? So must you. You must go downwards, that you may grow upwards. For the sweetest fellowship with heaven is to be had by humble souls, and by them alone. I believe that God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," with all its riches and treasures. The whole treasury of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it.

3. Further, my dear brethren, the act of humiliation will be very blessed to you and to me, because *it will improve our spiritual health*. To humiliate yourself is as necessary in this wicked world as it is for traveler's through African jungles to take, every now and then, a draught of quinine. The bitterness of humility is a tonic to the spirit. I know of no man who is so courageous before his fellow-man as he that bows before his God. My knee shall bend to God, and God alone.

But if my knee never bends to God, you may depend upon it, it will soon be bending when I do not want it to do so—it will tremble before the face of man. If you fear God with a deep and powerful fear, you shall fear nobody else. You should be able to say before a fierce tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar, with the three holy children, "Be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." The fear of God is the death of every other fear. Like a mighty lion, it chases all other fears before it. Nothing makes a man so vigorous and strong, with the exception of faith, as humility. And even faith itself cannot be strong where humility is weak.

4. Once more, *usefulness will be promoted by humility*. There are some professors whom God cannot bless, because they would grow intolerably proud if they were blessed. I heard a dear brother say that he believed God blessed us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it was safe for Him to do, and I believe He does so. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let you be successful in His holy war, you would run away with the crown yourself, and meeting with an enemy you would fall a victim, and so you are kept low for your own safety.

When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures so much as to touch a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of grace, and fits us to deal with our fellow-men. Everybody gets as far as he can from a proud man. I confess myself I have a great pleasure in seeing proud men, when I can hardly discern them with a powerful telescope, nearer than this would be far less agreeable.

We mind not how near we come to gentle and meek spirits, for these are company for angels. Proud spirits do not like to deal with great sinners. “Stand by, I am holier than you,” is not the language for a man who would be useful. What think you, would a Pharisee make a city missionary? Look at the fine gentleman, bloated with self-importance! What a useful preacher he would make, would he not?

Send him after the poor fallen girls at midnight meetings! Better send a peacock! “Stand by, I am holier than you.” why, the man who feels thus is out of place in the service of God. He is more fit to play lackey to the world’s vanities, than to talk of being a soldier of the cross. Just as the excess of pride disables, so an abundance of humility of spirit will fit you for any kind of Christian work to which the Holy Spirit may call you. Let us humble ourselves then, dear friends, that God may exalt us in due time by giving us to see the result of our work. I know not how to plead any further, but I commend to the Holy Spirit for fulfillment my deeply anxious desire for myself and for you, my brethren in the common faith, that we may all be brought like Josiah to humble ourselves before God.

There is yet a word which I desire to speak to those who are not saved. I do not say to you, begin with humbling yourselves—your hope lies in Jesus Christ. “Look unto me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” That is the Gospel. Your salvation lies not in you but in Jesus. At the same time, an humble and a contrite spirit will be a very ready way of leading you to Christ, and therefore I beseech you cultivate this spirit.

There is a story narrated in the classic history of Augustus Caesar, that a most troublesome pirate had destroyed many of the Roman vessels, and therefore Caesar, having hunted him in vain for some time, offered a reward of ten thousand talents for the pirate’s head. Now the pirate, knowing the case to be hopeless, and perhaps somewhat relenting, came himself before Caesar, and laying his head down before him in the dust, he said, “Ten thousand talents! I have brought the pirate’s head.” Caesar looked at him with astonishment, but said, “You have trusted the generosity of Caesar, and no man shall trust that in vain. You are pardoned. Here are the ten thousand talents too.”

Now, sinner, I would advise you to follow his example. Shrewd and sensible was that—be you as wise. God will have your head of you, no, your soul. But go yourself with it, submit yourself. After that evil May-day in our English history, when the apprentices had done so much mischief by destroying the foreigners’ houses and burning them, in a riot, a commission sat to try them, and a number of them were summoned to the Guildhall. But when they appeared with ropes about their necks, confessing that they deserved to be hanged, a free pardon was accorded to very many of them.

Come, poor soul, the Lord will never swing you up if you will put the rope round your own neck! If you will bring your own head, He will never take it off your shoulders. Come just as you are, confess the wrong, and trust to the liberality of God in Jesus Christ, and you shall not find Him fail.

You proud ones who are self-righteous will perish, but you who are humble, by trusting in Jesus, shall be saved. Yonder is a sinking ship! The vessel is going down rapidly, and I see two men equally anxious for life. One of them puts on his garments, heavy with gold lace, loads himself with jewels, fills

his pockets with his gold and his silver, and springs into the sea. You know what will become of him—he has weighted himself for destruction.

But here is another who takes off not only such jewelry as he may have upon him, but he strips himself even of his last rag, and then casts himself naked into the sea. If any man can swim, it is he. So do you, poor soul. If you have a rag of self-righteousness, off with it! If you have anything whatever of your own to depend upon, off with it! And if any man can swim in the sea of divine love, you are the man. And let me add, a naked spirit was never drowned there.

Lay hold on Jesus with nothing of your own in your hands, and “you shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck you out of his hands.” May God bless these words to us all for His love’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 86.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.